

IFAGE - A Summary of Our 2020 Annual Report

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1. Introductory Remarks from the Executive Director

Dear Friends,

It's true that the year 2020 was unprecedented with many losses and challenges. Many lives were lost, many economic developments were thwarted, and opportunities to improve on human inequalities and injustices including oppression of women and girls based on gender decreased. However, in the same period of COVID-19 pandemic, we

also learnt many vital lessons on environmental conservation and the gap that still exist in the quest for a just and equal world especially for women and girls. The same year 2020, also marked our 8th anniversary as an organization in our work on gender equality and women empowerment from a faith-based perspective, in order to improve on family and communal relationship, and to end sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) in society.

Our main objective and priority is to advocate for a just society where men and women are equal and free from sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). It's a fact that the COVID-19 pandemic has yet again revealed the gap and inequalities that still exist between men and women, and in the fight against sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). Study after study on the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic confirms that women and girls are still vulnerable to violence and discrimination based on gender as compared to men. The worrying reports of increased violence against women (VAW) during COVID-19 lockdowns, including rape and sexual violence against women, intimate partner violence mostly against women, teenage pregnancy, early marriages, among others tells it all.

Despite all these sad and negative reports from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on women and girls, I still believe that achieving gender equality is possible and attainable. My conviction is that we must change tact and strategies in some areas of gender programming and focus more on dealing with grass-root/ local communities on the root causes of violence against women and girls. It is a fact that patriarchal world views still breed social norms and practices that are harmful to women and girls based on gender, and we must be intentional in seeking safer ways to partner with local cultures and religious communities to bring much-needed change and transformation regarding our equal value, dignity and our shared humanity as women and men, boys and girls equally made in God's image.

We are grateful to our partners, board of management (BoM), and friends for their great support during the COVID-19 pandemic. Let's hope and believe that 2021 will be a year of careful reflection and consolidated efforts as we dive deep and bring transformation and a just world for everyone regardless of gender.

Rev. Dominic Misolo
Executive Director/CEO

2. IFAGE 2020 plans just before COVID-19 pandemic

We started the year 2020 with a very optimistic edge having planned to pilot the Transforming Masculinities (TM) model of Tearfund's faith-based community mobilization approach on Sexual and Gender-Based Violence within Bondo and Rarieda sub regions in Kenya, to work with local women groups and community youths groups in Uganda on "Improved Health & Gender-Responsive Climate Action Education", work with young boys and girls in schools in Kenya on gender equality, and to plan/host International/Pan African Faith Leaders Conference in Juba, South Sudan

on “The Role of Faith Actors on Peace and Gender Reconciliation”.

However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it is evident that everything changed, here at IFAGE, and the world at large, we had to redirect to the one huge concern that came with the pandemic, which is emergency humanitarian response on relief support and increased cases of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), domestic violence, teenage pregnancies, early marriages, among others. Reports on COVID-19 response activities are here below.

3. 2020 International Women’s Day/Month Activities

a) Promoting Community Dialogue with Parents & Caregivers

A week before the actual International Women’s day, through community leaders, we initiated dialogues and workshops, held deep discussions and shared with mothers, fathers and guardians seeking to generate positive changes in family relationships. Through these activities, we seek to build strong relationships between couples and their kids to enhance families built on respect, mutual trust, dialogues and shared responsibilities between females and males, husbands and wives, boys and girls.



A Couple attended our dialogue meeting in a school where their two daughters study with copies of "Still Side by Side" for further enrichment and empowerment on Faith and gender equality

b) Engaging Students/ boys & girls on Gender Equality talk shows

On 8th March during international women’s day over 2,000 girls and boys from different high schools in Bondo met in Nyamira Girls for an empowerment discussion exploring equality for boys and girls, social gender norms, the bible and gender equality and gender roles.

We always seek to challenge harmful social norms and perceptions about women and girls through creating safe spaces for youths/teenage boys and girls to strike dialogues about benefits of school and education, life skills sharing during this pandemic, sexuality education and SGBV, we seek to create free, fair and open discussions with the young ones to talk about things they can't share with their parents... the so-called 'forbidden topics'.



Images of girls holding the books and the selfie with the Director

4. A Summary of 2020 COVID-19 pandemic Projects/Activities at a Glance

In brief and response to the COVID-19 pandemic, we impacted the lives of about 35, 000 people directly and about 850, 000 people indirectly both in Bondo and Rarieda regions in Kenya through emergency response and training with community healthcare workers and government agencies on the COVID-19 pandemic. We mobilized and trained community lead actors and gatekeepers like religious and community leaders and local chiefs on the increased cases of violence against women and girls during the pandemic. We worked with survivors of sexual violence and local faith actors to respond to cases of sexual violence through survivors tracing, counseling and referrals. We also distributed emergency relief food to vulnerable families and groups. Kindly feel free to navigate and read our detailed below, we have the results, testimonies and inspirations from our beneficiaries and agents of change. Thank you for being part of these projects and stories!

5. Detailed Projects/Activities during COVID-19 Pandemic

a) Emergency Training & Response on COVID-19 Pandemic

After the first case of Covid-19 was reported in Kenya on 12th March 2020, the government provided guidelines and restrictions to curb the spread of the virus, most

people were unprepared and hence there was an urgent need for emergency sensitization of communities especially the key stakeholders of the gender issues. Our organization, Institute for Faith and Gender Empowerment (IFAGE) got space to collaborate with grass-root health providers including leaders from Public Health Officers, Community Health Volunteers and Clergy and created forums within 28 communities in Bondo and Rarieda area for sensitization of the key community leaders, to provide clear and actionable guidance for safe operations through the prevention, early detection and control of COVID-19 the Pandemic.

The training revolved around the following:

1. Myths, Misconception and misinformation on COVID like the cure for the disease.
2. The history of corona Virus
3. Signs and symptoms of COVID-19
4. Infection Prevention and Control (IPC); biosafety & insecurity.
5. How to deal with waste management.
6. Screening and case definition.
7. Risk communication.
8. Case management.
9. Psychological first aid.



COVID-19 sensitization training workshop

b) Leadership Training on SGBV/Survivors Tracing & Referrals

A pandemic of any nature has a tendency of rendering most people especially women and girls more vulnerable due to factor like, social status, economic regressions, loss of power and control and being cut off from social network support, among others. The Corona virus set the stage for the rise of domestic and sexual violence in 2020 more than ever as it heightened the rise of rape, child marriages, domestic violence in our

communities and women being on the receiving ends, among others.

With the movement restrictions and curfews, most victims were left with no outlets and access to help and essential services, we initiated a timely sexual and gender-based violence case management in which case referral forms were used as a tool to link the key stakeholders- the Community Health workers, the provincial administration, the faith leaders and child protection services together to a joint operation for timely protection of victims and to give hope and light to the vulnerable persons during Covid-19 lockdown and curfews.

With support from our partners and friends, we again successfully trained and empowered 40 public health officers, 60 community health volunteers, and 60 Clergy/Faith leaders from both Bondo and Rarieda regions and through the referral forms, more cases were reported, currently 32 of the cases are in court waiting for justice.



SGBV tracing and case management workshop

c) Emergency Relief food Distribution to Vulnerable Groups

Women, girls and vulnerable groups like the elderly/retired, persons with disabilities, refugees, migrants, and people living with HIV experience the highest degree of socio-economic marginalization and become even more vulnerable during COVID-19 pandemics.

With the help of local community leaders, we identified the most vulnerable persons within Bondo and Rarieda regions, the vulnerable persons included those who; depended heavily on the informal economy, occupied the most destitute parts of the community, had inadequate access to social services, had limited capacities and opportunities to cope and adapt and had no access to social amenities.

Among these, we had 234 persons with disabilities, 340 elderly persons and 507 persons living with HIV/AIDS including children, in total, we distributed relief food assistance and care packages to about 8,000 families and vulnerable groups including mothers with young children and SGBV survivors within Bondo and Rarieda in Kenya. Yaw Pachi Support Group is one of the groups which we supported through relief food donations. It has over 80 members of persons living with HIV/AIDS and they were happy to share their story.

d) COVID-19 Pandemic & Women Economic Empowerment

In most parts of sub-Saharan Africa, one out of four young women/girls become pregnant and drops out of school. This lowers the lifelong earning potential of the girls and women trapping them and their families in an inter-generational cycle of poverty that will never end.

We, IFAGE, believe in empowering women economically to reduce the economic dependency that exposes them to more risks of sexual violence. During the pandemic, we can all attest to the economic constraints that made women and girls more vulnerable to sexual and domestic abuse, it destabilized many small business enterprises for women during lockdown rendering them with no source of income.

Through the support of our partners and friends, we managed to support 25 women-led vulnerable families-where the female is the sole breadwinner with seed money of Ksh.15,000 (\$150) each to support their business. This program is still running and is constantly monitored and evaluated to ensure it is sustainable to empower women in Bondo and Rarieda in the long run.

We also support female students with school fees, 2 graduated from Moi University, 1 from Kenyatta University and another 1 from Siaya Institute this year, we still have students in several learning institutions including Nyamira Girls High School, Jaramogi Oginga Odinga Mixed Secondary School, St. Alloydce Girls, Siaya Institute of Technology, and Kenyatta University.



One of the beneficiaries at her village kiosk

6. The Girl Child Long Walk to Freedom Reading Journey

The Girl Child & Her Long Walk to Freedom, is an online resource material that sparks conversation and dialogue about patriarchy and the girl child long walk to freedom. The reading journey is a six-month program that began on October 11th 2020 to March 8th on International Women's Day 2021. It attracted over 140 individual leaders and change agents from all over the world.

This was a partnership between IFAGE and Imago Dei Fund that was launched in 2018 with a mission of bringing a contemplative and historic awareness to the intersection of faith and gender inequality and helping people “to put faith to work through love,” to transform the deep roots under the global patriarchy. It is dedicated to all the girl children around the world, represented in our universal protagonist of the Girl Child. She (the girl child) has to rise to reclaim Her full human agency from centuries of traditions, ideas, and practices that have systematically denied Her of the dominion we are all created to enjoy as image-bearers of the Divine. And it is for the Girl Child that we take whatever next step that is ours to take to create a better world.



<https://girlchildlongwalk.org/>

7. Our/IFAGE Vision & Mission Statement

Our Aim is to advocate for gender justice and equality in the sub-Saharan Africa, by addressing and transforming harmful social gender norms rooted in cultural and religious practices, causing violence against women and girls based on gender. We seek to empower and to transform local communities through integrated gender justice and equality programs—by targeting women leaders, religious groups, and community youth organizations regarding gender justice and equality from a faith perspective.

8. Funding Partners

- a) Christians for Biblical Equality (CBE-International) - USA
- b) Imago Dei Fund - USA
- c) St. James Kings Street Anglican Church - Sydney, Australia
- d) St. Luke's Episcopal Church Des Moines - USA

- e) Calvary Baptist Church - USA
- f) Global Horizon Inc. (Individual donors) - USA
- g) Boston College, School of Social Work - USA

Thank you very much

– From the IFAGE Team